

GOD'S MEMORIAL OF HIS PEOPLE

NO. 3441

A SERMON
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"Behold I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands."
Isaiah 49:16

RATHER more than eight years ago, I remember to have addressed you from these very words. You will find the sermon in the printed series [See Sermon #512—"A Precious Drop of Honey"] But such a text as this is to be preached hundreds of times. It is quite impossible to exhaust it, and if we should run over the same circle of thought in some measure, the thought suggested is of itself so precious, it were well to have our pure minds stirred up by way of remembrance.

The apprehension that God might forget us would be very horrible to a child of God. As to the ungodly, they care not whether God thinks of them or not. He is nothing to them and they care not whether they are anything to Him. To the Christian, it is far otherwise. He could imagine no greater calamity than for him to be forgotten of his God. He knows there are many reasons in him why he should be forgotten, and though those reasons are all met by the promises of God, yet there are times when those reasons exercise great effect upon his mind.

As, for instance, the Christian knows how insignificant he is. It is always a wonder to him that God did ever think of him. Like David, when he considers the heavens, the works of God's fingers, the moon and the stars which God has ordained, he says, "What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him?"

The ungodly man has large ideas of himself, but the Christian has very humbling notions of his own condition, and he marvels, therefore, that God ever should have remembered him, and fears sometimes lest he should be forgotten. So, too, the Christian is aware of his own unworthiness. He knows something of his natural depravity. He remembers somewhat of things done in his youth, his former transgressions—he sees that even now he is not clear from sin in his daily life—and he says within himself at times, "If the Lord were to deal with me according to my desert, He would certainly appoint me a portion with the unbeliever, discountenance me, and cast me away."

Ay, and when he thinks of his unthankfulness to God for His many mercies, and remembers what a sting there is in ingratitude, and how it cuts sharp the person who is wronged by it, he sometimes wonders that God has not turned against His ungrateful servant and said, "You are not mindful of My goodness. You make such a slight return for it, that I will henceforth no more remember you. The streams of My mercy shall be dried up and the sunlight of My favor shall be taken away forever."

Oh! what should we do if God did forget us for any of these reasons, my brethren? We could bear, it might be, to be forgotten by the dearest heart that beats in the fondest bosom of our nearest relative—bitter, indeed, would be such an affliction, to find a Judas where we hoped we had a friend, but let all creature friendships go sooner than God should forget us.

It would be a calamity if death should visit our habitations, or if sickness should come and lay us low, if some calamity should strip us of our earthly comforts, but let them all go without reservation, let us be reduced to Job's extremity and sit upon a dunghill, and scrape ourselves with a potsherd, sooner than God should forget us. That were hell itself.

Oh! may we rejoice in heart by faith that this calamity cannot occur to us. And let this text help to remove any fear that any believer here has ever had, that he may be forgotten of God. The text was meant to meet that case, for so it runs, "Can a woman forget her sucking child that she should not have

compassion upon the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.” And here is the reason given, “I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands.”

We come, therefore, brethren, by the help of God's Spirit, to consider *this divine memorial*—“I have graven thee on the palms of my hands.” Then very briefly let us trace out *the result of this memorial of God*. And let us close with *a personal reflection upon the object of this divine remembrance*—“I have graven THEE upon the palms of my hands.”

I. THE DIVINE MEMORIAL.

We have here a metaphorical speech to set forth the impossibility of God's forgetting us. “I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands.” I will give a catchword to each particular explanation of this metaphor. *The first word is present*. When we have a thing fresh in our minds and we need to make others know that we have it close to our memory, we say we have it at our fingertips.

I say to such an one, “I shall not forget you. I constantly recollect you. Your name, your business, and your circumstances are at my fingertips.” Everyone understands what is meant by the expression. It is a present memorial, but the figure of speech here used is more beautiful than that. “I have you as near to Me as if I had you always in the palms of my hands.” That by which I remember you is most near to Me.

A dear friend told me that when travelling in the East, he frequently saw persons who had the portraits of their friends printed on the palms of their hands. I said to him, “But did not they wear out?” Yes, sometimes,” he said, “but very frequently they were tattooed, marked right into the hand, and then, as long as the hand was there, there was the image of the friend, roughly drawn, of course.” Oriental art is not very perfect, but there it was, drawn on the palms of the hands, so that it could be always seen.

A person had never to say, “Run and fetch the portrait. Run and bring me the memorial”—he always had it present with him. So the Lord Jesus always has His people present with him at all times. He is the Head, they are the members. The members are never far off from the Head. He is the Shepherd, they are the sheep—and the careful shepherd, in time of danger, is never far from his sheep. Christ is not far from any of His people and therefore, His recollections of them are not difficult to be maintained. He keeps the memorial of them in His hands—present with Him. There is no fear, therefore, that He will forget them.

The next thought that arises from the metaphor may be remembered by the catchword of *permanent*. As I have already said, the impression made upon the hands, as intended in this figure, was permanent—so long as the person lived, there it was. You engrave your friend's name upon a sapphire and you may lose it. You may write it upon a rock and the rock may crumble. You may get to yourself the most precious and lasting form of matter, and stamp the impression of your friend upon it, and by and by it may molder away.

But when Christ says that He writes His people's names upon His hands, unless He Himself can perish, their memorial must abide. As long as Jesus lives, He must bear with Him the memories of His people. It is inconceivable that Christ should be without a hand—and what is deeply graven deep on those palms, never to be erased, must abide near to Him forever and forever.

Oh! think, Christian, you are never forgotten of God! Never in your darkest night of sorrow, never in your most wayward moment of personal doubt and wandering, never forgotten, and you never shall be. If you live to the decrepitude of old age, He will bear and carry you. If you lie long upon a lonely pallet, where few shall observe your suffering, He will not forget you.

If you are drifted to some remote part of the world, far from all you love, He will be just as near. Time shall roll on and come to its close, but Christ will not forget you then, and in the eternity that comes amidst the burning of the world and the judging of mankind, the graving on His hand shall be as permanent as ever, and you shall still be remembered of the Lord who loved you or ever the earth was.

Present and permanent, then, is the memorial which Christ cherishes of His people. We have lately seen an unusual number of rainbows and I must confess that nothing gives me greater joy than to see the rainbow. It is the memorial of the covenant. I like to look upon it. But there is something more

cherishing to me than looking on it myself—it is the thought of that text where God “saith the bow shall be in the cloud, and I will look upon it that I may remember the everlasting covenant.”

It comforts me that I can look on the sign of God's faithfulness, but it comforts me much more that God looks at it—that His eye is on it. Had I been an Israelite, I think it would have given me much pleasure to see the blood sprinkled on the lintel and the two side posts of my house. I should have known I was secure. But there is something better than that. You remember the text, “When I see the blood, I will pass over you.” It is God's sight of the blood that saved you.

So here it is Christ that looks at the palms of His own hands—that sees the memorial—looks there always, and has not to look far, for His hands are not far removed from Himself—they are part of Himself. It is on Himself He bears the memory—the permanent memory of all whom He has bought with blood. Therefore, be you comforted and think not that you are overlooked.

The third word shall be *personal*—present, perpetual, and personal. “I have graven thee not in the book of record, but I have graven thee upon Myself, upon the palms of My hands.” It means this—I will put it in one short, compact sentence—that Christ could as soon forget Himself as He could forget His people. He has stamped them into Himself.

Yea, more—He has taken them into such vital, indelible union with His own person, that to forget one soul that He has bought with blood would be to forget Himself. The mother does not forget her child because there is an intimate connection between them. The head cannot forget the members because there is a still more intimate connection there. My finger does not need to tell my head that it suffers, and when a limb is full of pain and agony, it does not need to send express messengers up to the brain to say to the head, “Think of me, for I am full of grief.”

No, the head feels that the limb is a part of itself, knit to itself. And Christ has a personal interest and a personal union with all His people. Oh! precious thought! You are dearer to Christ than any treasure could be to Him, because you are of His flesh and of His bones. This is the reason—this is one reason that is given in Scripture—for conjugal love, because the woman was taken out of the man, and she is bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh—and when our blessed Second Adam fell asleep in death, God took His church out of His side, and the church is bone of Christ's bone and flesh of His flesh. He cannot forget her. He looks upon her with a love that never can change and never can be indifferent.

The next word I shall give you after this one of personal is *painful*. “I have graven thee on the palms of my hands.” I may be permitted to illustrate this by our Savior's hands. What are these wounds in Your hands, these sacred *stigmata*, these ensigns of suffering? The engraver's tool was the nail, backed by the hammer. He must be fastened to the cross, that His people might be truly graven on the palms of His hands.

There is much consolation here. We know that what a man has won with great pain, he will keep with great tenacity. Old Jacob valued much that portion which he took out of the hand of the Amorite with the sword and with the bow, and so truly does Christ value that which He has conquered at great expense. Child of God, you cost Christ too much for Him to forget you. He recollects every pang He suffered in Gethsemane, and every groan that He uttered for you upon the cross. The graving upon His hands brings to His recollection the redemption price which He paid down that you might be set free. Oh! what better ground can you have for believing that Christ remembers you than this—that He loved you and gave Himself for you? Treasure up that thought.

The other word is *practical*. “I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands.” As much as if God would say, “I can do nothing without remembering My people.” If He creates the world, it is with the hand that has His people graven on it. If He puts forth His hand to uphold all things, that upholding hand upholds His saints. With His left hand He smites the wicked. But He cannot smite His people, for He sees them in the palm of that very hand.

All that God does has an eye to His people. When He divided the nations, He divided them according to the number of the children of Israel. The world stands for their sake—'tis but a stage for the

display of His grace to them. And when the number of His elect is accomplished, He will take it all down and put it away.

O child of God, the Lord has given you the richest consolation when He tells you He can do nothing without remembering you, for on the hand with which He works He has stamped your name. Note before I leave this, that it does not say, "I have graven thee on the palm of my hand," but "on the palms of my hands," as if there was a double memorial before the Lord forever. With His right hand He blesses, and His people have a share in that. With His left hand He deals out vengeance, but He sees His people there, and gives no vengeance to them.

"His left hand," the hand of His angry power, "is under my head," says the spouse, "and His right hand, the hand of His beneficent love, does embrace me." A left-handed or a right-handed God, He altogether loves us, and remembers us on the right hand and on the left. By both His hands, by all His power, He pledges Himself never to forget one of His saints.

Oh! this is a rich text and we trust we shall so handle it as to bring out the juice from the luscious sentences, throw it in the winepress, and tread it again and again with active feet, and it shall always yield fresh sweetness, and give forth yet more and more luscious draughts to slake your thirst, if you know but how to use it. Dear, abiding, precious memorial of our crucified Lord, you do charm away our fears. He never can forget us.

And now, briefly, not for lack of matter, but for want of time—

II. WHAT WILL BE THE RESULT OF OUR BEING THUS DAILY REMEMBERED?

Children of God, God remembers you *to make you joyful*. How runs the text? "Sing, O heavens, and be joyful, O earth." The Lord, who thinks of you, will give you heydays and holidays sometimes. You shall not always be in the dark.

Do you recollect how John Bunyan describes it, that after Giant Despair's head had been cut off, Mr. Ready-to-Halt, and Miss Much-Afraid, and Miss Despondency, all of them had a feast, and they had a dance, too, and Mr. Ready-to-Halt leaped on his crutches. The very weakest and most limping among God's saints sometimes have their seasons of joys and rejoicing, and so shall you.

You daughters of depression, you sons of sorrow, God has graven thee upon the palms of His hands. You have had your evenings, you shall have your mornings—you have had your droughts, you shall have your floods. If God remembers us, we may rest assured that *He will provide for all our needs*. If the shepherd remembers the sheep, the sheep shall not starve. If the husbandman remembers the plant, it will be cared for.

God, who is the great husbandman, remembering the plants of His garden, says, "I will water them every moment." If the mother remembers her babe, it is to give it all it wants and lull its griefs to rest. God will give us all we need. Sons of want, you who feel your need, be of good comfort—you are graven on the palms of JEHOVAH's hands.

We shall not want any good thing if He remembers us, so let us reflect that *we shall get chastened some time*. A child forgotten of its parent, never feels the rod. I have been comforted sometimes when I have been smarting, to think I was not quite cast off. The goldsmith will not put a common stone into the furnace—he sets some value on that which he spends his coals upon.

If the Lord afflicts you, O heir of heaven, He has not cast you away, be sure of that. The refining that you are undergoing proves that He sets a price upon you. He has taken trouble and care with you. By the furnace, maybe, He will deliver you from your dross and your sin. Oh! to be remembered, even if it is with a blow, is better than to be forgotten and to be left to riot in this world's pleasures.

Let me be, my God, only able to know I am Yours by Your rod, sooner than have to live in doubt and fear as to whether I am Yours or not. If God thus remembers us, and we get chastened, we may also know that *we shall have consolation in chastening and be delivered in due time out of the trial*. If you are graven on the palms of God's hands, though you should have to lie long and pine on that couch of suffering, He will not forget you.

Oh! my dear young friends, whose pale faces often grieve me when I see you sad, let us look up to God for comfort. Though you are marked for death, He does not forget you. He will cheer those days of growing weakness, and as you get nearer to the grave, you will also get nearer to heaven. Many a poor woman lying in a lone cottage, or dying in a workhouse, has had more joy than some of the princes of earth in all their wealth and pride. Christ never leaves those who are His in the world, but to them He reveals Himself more sweetly than to others.

I would like to say to every child of God here, because God remembers you, *all that you lose between here and heaven will He be sure to give you*. All you ask for that is right, you shall have, and a great deal you never thought of asking for. You shall have as much sweet and as much bitter. You shall have as much of everything that is good for you, as shall be best, and afterwards you shall have the fullness, you shall have the glory, for, being graven on the palms of God's hands, He will not forget to bring you home to the place where He is and to appoint you a mansion among His chosen.

I wish I could speak more at large on this, but we have hurried over it. Only take it home—chew the cud upon this. It is worth it. Here are subjects for meditation that any thoughtful mind may bring out. If God remembers me, it is all I want. You know that verse we sometimes sing that ends, “This my Father knows; this my Father knows.” Oh! yes, your wants, He sees them all. Your heavenly Father knows that you have need of these things. There is nothing more required to comfort your hearts. If He knows it is good for you, you shall have it.

And now to close. Who is it that is—

III. THE OBJECT OF THIS REMEMBRANCE?

“I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands.” “Thee”—pass it round. Let each one before God, as though he saw Christ upon the judgment throne, ask himself, “Am I graven upon the palms of Jesus' hands—am I?” It is nothing that His whole church is there—His Zion. He is immediately thinking of His truly blood-bought, regenerate people—there they are—all there.

He has in His eyes the circumstances as He has on His hands the names of many that are greatly afflicted. Notice the connection of the text—*it is to* the afflicted that He is there speaking. He says, “The LORD will have mercy on his afflicted”—and He says that their names are on His hand. Don't say, then, that you are not the Lord's because you are afflicted. Because you are low in circumstances, or sick in body, don't conclude, therefore, that you are not in Christ, but rather pray more earnestly than ever that these trials may be greatly sanctified to you.

Nor, beloved, don't conclude that you are not Christ's because you feel you are sinful. Observe how the connection runs, “He will have *mercy* on his afflicted.” Now mercy is *for sinners*. I may be a sinner, but yet graven on the hands of Christ, for, indeed, all whose names are written there are by nature guilty, but they have obtained mercy. The greatness of my past guilt does not prove that I have no interest in Christ. If I have faith in Him, if I come and put my trust in Him, then is my name written on the palms of His hands.

But is it so, dear reader? Is it so? Have you trusted Christ or not? Answer you, I say again, as though Christ were here upon the throne of His judgment. Answer now. Do you rest your soul alone on Jesus Christ? If you do, all that is implied in having yourself imprinted upon the hands of Christ is yours. Take it—enjoy it—be glad. What consolation should this Scripture itself afford! But if you have not believed, touch not these sweet things, but rather say, “Lord, help me to believe tonight.” To believe is but to trust—to rest yourself upon Christ. Watts calls it falling:

*“A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Thy kind hands I fall.”*

Here I am leaning on this rail. If this that I lean upon, fails me, down I must go. I have no other support. Lean just like this on Christ. You have seen a fainting person at last throw himself back on another. Do that to Christ—faint away into Christ. Relax all your own power—let it all go. That sham

power you think you have, and that merit you think you have, and all the hopes you ever had—let them all go and now drop into Christ's arms.

I have heard it said that if a man would only lie still when he falls into the water—lie on his back—he would float, but the tendency is to struggle. Don't struggle, sinner, after righteousness in your own strength—fall back and rest on the infinite love of God in Christ Jesus. 'Tis all you have to do—to leave off doing and let Christ do everything. And when Christ has done that everything, then you shall begin doing again on quite another principle—not with a view to merit, but out of gratitude to Him who saved you.

I do pray that some may be saved tonight in this house. Before they go down yonder steps, may some of you look to Jesus. There is life in a look. I cannot help bringing out these simple truths often and often, but they are constantly forgotten. Those that were bitten by the serpent in the wilderness had not anything to say, had not anything to feel, had not anything to think of—all they had to do was just to look to the serpent lifted on the pole. And you have nothing to do, or feel, or be, in and of yourself—all you have to do is to look straight away to Christ.

There is not any good thing in you. Know that to begin with. You say, "But I am bad." I know you are—you are ten thousand times worse than you think you are. You are, bad as you may conceive yourself to be—worse than that by fifty thousand times, but your goodness is in Jesus, your hope is in Jesus.

Look straight away now to those dear wounds of Jesus. Look straight to Him. And if you perish trusting in Christ, you will be the first sinner that ever perished there. It will be a novelty in hell, and the news will be spread on earth, and even in heaven, that there was a sinner that trusted Christ and then perished. Farewell to the Gospel, then. Put away the Bible. We have done with Christ Himself if that could be true.

But it never can be. "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." Look, man. Look, woman. Look, child. Whoever you may be, there is life in a look at the Crucified One, there is life at this moment for you. Look, sinner. Look unto Him and be saved. Look unto Jesus, who died on the tree. May God bless you all for Christ's sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

ISAIAH 42:1-17; 43:18-25; ROMANS 10:1-19

ISAIAH 42:1-17

This book might well be called "the Gospel according to Isaiah," for it is full of evangelical truth.

Verse 1. *Behold my servant, whom I uphold: mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.*

Of whom speaks the Prophet this, but of the Messiah—Jesus of Nazareth? He was upheld by the mighty power of God. He was the Lord's chosen. The Spirit of God rested upon Him and this day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears, for He has brought forth righteousness to the Gentiles.

2. *He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street.*

He shall be no clamorous seeker after applause. He shall not shout as those that seek for the mastery. Now the Savior was quiet, gentle, meek, humble. When He lifted up His voice, it was for God and for the sons of men—not for Himself. He was meek and lowly of heart.

3. *A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth.*

How exactly these words describe the Lord Jesus! He was so gentle that He did not break or break off the bruised reeds. We read that He did not answer the Scribes and Pharisees. They were so powerless—such bruised reeds in His esteem—such worthless, smoking flaxes—that He let them alone

until by and by He came to bring forth judgment unto victory. And now the weak, the feeble, the gentle, the poor in spirit, shall never find Christ to deal hardly with them. "The bruised reed he will not break: the smoking flax he will not quench."

4. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth and the isles shall wait for his law.

Oh, what a blessed thing it is that we have a Savior to trust to, who will not fail, and He is one who will never be discouraged. He will carry out the salvation of His people and never give it up as a hopeless case. Poor sinner, if He begins with you, He will not fail nor be discouraged—nor will He even with the whole earth. He will not take back His hand till surely all flesh shall see the glory of the Lord. He who has undertaken man's redemption is not feeble of spirit and easily baffled. He shall not fail or be discouraged.

5-6. Thus saith God the Lord, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein: I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles;

See what God has made His Son, Jesus Christ? If you want to get a part in the covenant of grace, you have only to lay hold on Christ, for Christ is given as a covenant to the people. He is the embodiment of the covenant—the sum and substance of it—the seal of it—the surety of it. He is, indeed, the covenant itself. And if you want light, you have only to get Christ. He is the light of the world and here we are told that God has given Him for a light to the Gentiles.

7. To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.

Hear this, you melancholy ones, you that are desponding, you that cannot get out of the prison of bad habits, or shake off the chains of sin. Behold a liberator has come—one whose very business it is to open the fast closed cells of sin and set the captives of Satan free.

8-9. I am the Lord: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images. Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them.

One great proof of the truth of the deity of JEHOVAH is that He can foresee and foretell, so that long ere events happen He makes them known. Now Isaiah, by God's Spirit, told the Israelites concerning Christ hundreds of years before Christ came—and yet the terms are so express that one might almost think that they were written after the event. But does not God know and is not He God who sees through the mists of ages, and looks upon the things that are to be as though they were? Verily He is God.

10-11. Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise from the ends of the earth, ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein; the isles, and the inhabitants thereof. Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar doth inhabit: let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains.

For the coming of Christ is the coming of music into the world. When He hung upon the cross, there were lighted up new stars to cheer earth's night. Nay, what if I say that the sun itself had risen then to chase away the darkness once for all? O Lamb of God. Creation made the angels sing, but redemption makes us fallen men sing, for it lifts us up to sit among the angels, through Your most precious blood.

12. Let them give glory unto the LORD, and declare his praise in the islands.

Now for His enemies. While God is thus graciously dealing with men, He determines to make an end of the powers of evil.

13. The Lord shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war: he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail against his enemies.

Do not imagine that the gods of the heathen will always sit on their thrones—that the powers of anti-Christ will always darken the earth. Ah! no. God will bestir Himself ere long.

14. *I have a long time held my peace; I have been still and refrained myself: now will I cry like a travailing woman; I will destroy and devour at once.*

Oh! what a time will that be when God comes forth in the splendor of His power to put down all the hosts of evil.

15. *I will make waste mountains and hills, and dry up all their herbs: and I will make the rivers islands, and I will dry up the pools.*

What a terrible God He is! When He once puts forth His hand for deeds of justice and of vengeance, who can stand before Him, but yet how His mercy walks arm-in-arm with His justice.

16. *And I will bring the blind by the way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.*

Oh! the condescension of God that even when His right arm is bared for war, and thunder girds His cloudy car, yet still He stoops out of the chariot of wrath to look after poor, blind, helpless souls, and lead them in the way of peace and mercy. But as for His enemies—

17. *They shall be turned back, they shall be greatly ashamed, who trust in graven images, that say to the molten images, Ye are our gods.*

ISAIAH 43:18-25

Verses 18-19. *Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.*

Do not imagine that what God has done in the past will never be repeated. It will be excelled—He will do yet greater things. Of all the mercy and love which God has shown, we may say that these are only prophecies of what He yet will reveal. There are now things yet to come wherein the splendor of His mercy shall be yet more clearly seen than in all the former things.

20-21. *The beast of the field shall honour me, the dragons and the owls: because I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen. This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise.*

However barren may your soul be, and however all your surroundings may seem to be stamped with death, God can come and make you happy and blessed, and surround you with delights, and He will do it in order that in you, whom He has formed for Himself, His praise may be seen.

22. *But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob.*

Prayer has been neglected. Praise has been suspended. There has been an ungracious negligence in the service of God. “Thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob.”

22. *But thou hast been weary of me, O Israel.*

“You thought the service long—thought the time for prayer came round too soon—refused to give to My cause and said it was a tax. You have been weary of Me, O Israel.”

23. *Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt offerings; neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices. I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense.*

“I have not taxed you. I have not drawn upon your resources heavily.”

24. *Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices*

“I left you to give or not to give, that your free will might be seen in all your deeds of love, but nothing has come of it. On the contrary”—

24. *But thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities.*

A solemn charge, this, which God lays against His people. Now see the next verse and read it with wondering eyes.

25. *I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.*

He has pointed out the fault. He has shown that He is not forgetful of it. And then He pronounces absolution. The transgression is put away. Blessed be His name!

Now let us turn to the New Testament and read in the epistle to the Romans, the tenth chapter, and we shall there see the way in which pardon is brought home to the soul.

ROMANS 10:1-19

Verses 1-3. *Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.*

A fault—a pitiable and grievous fault—that men should be in earnest and very zealous, and yet nothing should come of it, because they spend that zeal in a wrong direction. Men would make themselves righteous. They would come before God in the apparel of their own works, whereas God has made a righteousness already which He freely gives, and for us to try and produce another is to enter into rivalry with God—to insult His Son and do dishonor to His name.

May God grant that any here who are very zealous in a wrong direction may receive light and knowledge, and henceforth turn their thoughts in the right way.

4-5. *For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man who does those things shall live by them.*

That is the righteousness of the law. We are not under that covenant now. We shall never attain to righteousness that way.

6-9. *But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*

How very simple! No climbing, no diving, no imagining, no long reckoning of the understanding, no strangling of the mental faculties. It is just believe God's testimony concerning His Son and you shall be saved.

10-11. *For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.*

[Gentile] in this matter.

12-13. *For the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*

This was the old prophecy of Joel. The Jews knew it. It is the new teaching of the Gospel. The Gentiles know it. Oh! who would not wish to be in that broad "whosoever," that he might find salvation?

14-15. *How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!*

So that, rightly looked upon, the humblest preacher of the Gospel stands in the most solemn relationship towards mankind. His Master sends him. He tells His message. Men hear it, believe it, and by it are saved. Happy is the messenger. Well may his heart rejoice, even when his soul is heavy, because he has such work to do in his Master's name.

16. *But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, LORD, who hath believed our report?*

And what Isaiah says, many and many a preacher since has had to say. “Woe, woe to us for this.”

17-19. *So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. But I say, Did not Israel know*

Did not the Jewish people have a time of hearing and instruction? Certainly they knew—and they also knew that the Gospel was not to be confined to them. They had a warning that it would even be taken from them and sent to other nations.

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